



Emergency Wound Care

The risk for injury during and after a hurricane and other natural disasters is high. Prompt first aid can help heal small wounds and prevent infection. Tetanus (<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/vis-td.pdf>) is a potential health threat for persons who have open wounds.

Seek medical attention as soon as possible if:

- There is a foreign object embedded in the wound;
- The wound is at special risk of infection (such as a dog bite, or a puncture by a dirty object);
- An old wound shows signs of becoming infected (increased pain and soreness, swelling, redness, draining, or you develop a fever).

How to care for minor wounds

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water if possible.
- Avoid touching the wound with your fingers while treating it (if possible, use disposable, latex gloves).
- Remove obstructive jewelry and clothing from the injured body part.
- Apply direct pressure to any bleeding wound to control bleeding.
- Clean the wound after bleeding has stopped.
 - Examine wounds for dirt and foreign objects.
 - Gently flood the wound with bottled water or clean running water (if available, saline solution is preferred).
 - Gently clean around the wound with soap and clean water.
 - Pat dry and apply an adhesive bandage or dry clean cloth.
- Leave unclean wounds, bites, and punctures open. Wounds that are not cleaned correctly can trap bacteria and result in infection.
- Provide pain relievers when possible.

Other Considerations

- Expect a variety of infection types from wounds exposed to standing water, sea life and ocean water.
- Wounds in contact with soil and sand can become infected.
- Puncture wounds can carry bits of clothing and dirt into wounds and result in infection.
- Crush injuries are more likely to become infected than wounds from cuts.

If you have wounds, you should be evaluated for a tetanus immunization. If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, have a health care professional determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary based on individual records.

Emergency Wound Care

(continued from previous page)

References

Krohmer, J.R., Rapp M.T. & American College of Emergency Physicians. (2001). First aid manual: A comprehensive guide to treating emergency victims of all ages in any situation. (3rd ed.) New York: Dorling Kindersley Limited.

Tintinalli, J.E., Kelen, G.D., Stapczynski, J.S., & American College of Emergency Physicians. (2004). Emergency medicine: A comprehensive guide. (6th ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill.

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes,
or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6348 (TTY).

September 3, 2005

Page 2 of 2